

Special Issue

On The Concepts of Phenomenon, Essence, Form, Matter and

Content

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1. Phenomenon and Essence

Phenomenon refers to the outside circumstances which can be perceived directly by the sense organs of humans, when phenomenon is antagonistic to essence. The concept of in-itself, which Hegel put forward in his books *Encyclopedia of Logic* and *Logic*, refers to the concept of phenomenon. The outside circumstances includes not only the real situation or state of affairs, when people show the real situation or state of affairs, such as the airplanes, big guns, various works of languages, the other output of the subjective dispositions, various products of objective practice, the apples, but also the false appearance, such as the various circumstances which people speak out when they deceive people, the false fortifications, the false products, etc. The outside circumstances includes also the thinker's own living organs and the situation of the moving of his own body. Therefore, phenomenon is the base and starting point for us to do the subjective disposition. It is the base and starting point for us to go back to it to do the subjective disposition at any time. It is like the original or firsthand data, which the scientific researchers to consult or look up at any time.

“All sound and true philosophy is based on phenomena” said by Roger Cotes (1642-1727), Fellow of Trinity College, Plumian Professor of Astronomy and Experimental Philosophy. Roger Cotes was a great scientist at the same time with Isaac Newton. Newton himself should also keep the above viewpoint on the relation between phenomena and subjective disposition, since the words above were in the *Editor's Preface to the Second Edition* of the book *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, which is the most important work by Newton in his life. This edition was published when Newton was alive, and Newton never denounced them in his life.

Immanuel Kant' view points on the relation between phenomena and subjective disposition are quite correct and inspiring. he said at the beginning in of his book of *Critique of Pure Reason*, that

“There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins experience ... But though all our knowledge

begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out experience. For it may well be that even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our own faculty of knowledge (sensible impressions serving merely as the occasion) supplies from itself. If our faculty of knowledge makes any such addition, it may be that we are not in a position to distinguish it from the raw material, until with long practice of attention we have become skilled in separating...It is precisely by means of the latter modes of knowledge, in a realm belong the world of senses, where experience can yield neither guidance nor correction, that our reason carries on those inquiries which owing to their importance we consider to be far more excellent, and in their purpose far more lofty, than all that the understanding can lean in the field of appearances. Indeed we prefer to run every risk of error rather than desist from such urgent enquiries, on the ground of their dubious character, or from disdain and indifference. These unavoidable problems set by pure reason itself are *God, freedom, and immortality*. The science which, with all its preparations, is in its final intention directed solely to their solution is metaphysics; and its procedure is first dogmatic, that is, it confidently sets itself to this task without any previous capacity or incapacity of reason for so great an undertaking... Now it does indeed seem natural that, as soon as we have left the ground of experience, we should, through careful enquiries, assure ourselves as to the foundations of any building that we propose to erect, not making use any knowledge that we possess without first determining whence it has come, and not trusting to principles without knowing their origin. It is natural, that is to say, that the question should first be considered, how the understanding can arrive at all this knowledge *a priori*, and what extent, validity, and worth it may have.” (Note 1)

However, here Kant did not distinguish the individual thinking from the collective thinking. Nor did he realize the relation between the individual thinking and the collective thinking. Nor did he distinguish the human ability to get or succeed knowledge clearly from the knowledge which the other humans had already got. That is, he confused the moments of phenomenon, matter, content or subjective disposition as one moment. Actually, humans cannot get any knowledge without the empirical moment or the moment of phenomenon, including the concepts of space and time, which he talked very much. The simplest evidence is that the names of the concepts of space and time have to be the same with the names which the predecessors of the language community had put forward and used. Otherwise, the other people cannot understand what you are speaking. It is your and the other persons’ practice of language which make the others understand what you are speaking and what the concepts of space and time mean through the moment of their understanding. The languages themselves are phenomena, though the appearance and development of languages cannot be away from the existence and development of human thinking. The appearance and development of languages cannot be away from the consensus of the language communities, that is, the universal agreement and understanding of the members of the language communities as a whole.

What should be mentioned here is the concept of phenomenon which belongs to the human society, that is, the human phenomenon. The reason to put forward the concept of human phenomenon is that

humans have produced many things which could never be evolved naturally, such as television, engine, man-made satellite, space shuttle, etc. However, they still belong to the field of phenomenon from one perspective, though they are made by humans, because they are objective existence. They are the objects, which have to be disposed in humans' minds, to those who do not know the principles, or the theories, or the technology, or to the following generations. They can be the things which can be operated properly and beneficial to humans, only through the learning periods, such as primary school, middle school, undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD, post-doctor, and the specific training, etc. During the learning periods, the teachers and the relevant staff would help them in learning and understanding the relevant theories and technology, in the forms of division, re-division, condensed and enriched, in order to help them in operating them and grasping the above knowledge in a relatively short time and be beneficial to humans.

Hegel put forward the concept of things for-itself in his *Logic* and *Encyclopedia of Logic*. This concept refers to the things which are in the stages of essence and concept.

In Chinese language at present, the concept of essence first refers to the end of the genus, centrality and abstraction, and refers to common or joint point with the other things, and refers to the connection with the other things, when the concept of phenomenon is in the state of antagonistic against the concept of essence. For instance, the essence refers to genus, when we say that the essence of a man is animal, the essence of a cat is animal, or that the essence of an apple is fruit, etc. People can use the concepts of essence and genus to connect many kinds of objects according to certain aspect or perspective of the objects, and further to help people to remember and use the characteristics of the objects, and to help people in their living practice and producing practice. Therefore, the first and basic function of the concept of essence is to help people in put their environment into category. That is to say, the reason for people to create the concept of essence is to help people in setting up a great and multilevel administration of concepts, in order to help people in their division and cooperation, because people of a language community have to deal with too many things at the same time.

In this way, the concept of essence can get its objective content and subjective content. The objective content is the function and characteristics of the object. The subjective content is the name of the object. The different language communities may create different names for the same objects, because the different language

communities may have had different concrete ways of their historical development. For instance, potato is sounded or named as too do in Chinese language in most cases at present, but the English spoken people call it potato. In this situation, different language communities can get to understand and communicate by pointing out the object, that is the potato, because the object has got the same objective content.

The concepts, which have got the characteristics of essence, are more abstract, comparing some individual things or concrete things. For instance, the concept of cat is more abstract than the concept of the cat which belongs to my family. Therefore cat is the essence of the cat which belongs to my

family. Actually, all the material nouns have the duality, they are essence and genus, and at the same time, they are concepts. To their upper-seat concepts, or upper-seat nouns, or upper-seat thinking moments, they are inferior concepts, or inferior nouns, or inferior thinking moments. To their inferior concepts, they are genus or essence. For instance, mammal are the essence of cats and dogs, mammal contains many kinds of cats, such as tigers, lions, leopards, cats, dogs, wolves, etc. Conversely tigers, cats, dogs, wolves, etc., are the existent forms of the mammal. Whereas cat are the genus and essence of tigers, lions, leopards, cats, etc., that is, its inferior concepts, or inferior nouns, which are connecting relatively less than cat. Therefore, the difference between the essence or genus and the phenomenon is a relation between quality and measurement, a difference between the higher and lower degree of abstraction. The concept of essence has got the higher degree of abstraction, while the concept of phenomenon has got the lower degree of abstraction. This is one of the sources for quantity to transform into the quality in human minds.

Besides, the same thing, or same phenomenon, can have many essence or genus. For instance, a cat have got carnivorous animal, mammal, vertebrate animal, a chordate, living being, thing, etc., as its the essence or genus, just like what has mentioned in the former chapter of this book. Hegel said that “essence is something which has not been defined or refined.” (Note 2) In this circumstances, essence is an phenomenon which is changeable according to the subjective need. Therefore, in the antithesis, or opposition, or antagonism, between phenomenon and essence, there is the phenomenon that the transition between the opposite sides in humans’ minds, that is, the phenomenon changes to the essence, e.g., cat changes to the animal, that is, the concept of cat transit up to the concept of animal; and the essence changes to the phenomenon, e.g., animal changes to the cat, that is, the concept of animal transit down to the concept of cat, in humans’ minds. In this case, what the essence refers to the changes or transition to the phenomenon, which is determined by the subjective need, that is, there is the fact of the transition or change between their opposite sides in reality. The subjective need here refers to the individual needs in his thinking and expression. The objective need here refers to the collective or colony or group needs in their thinking and expression.

Essence in Chinese language at present refers also to nature, or identity, or differentia, or distinguish feature. For instance, Hegel said once that notion’s or concept’s very nature is to suspend its presupposition, as already mentioned in the above chapters. Here Hegel said is the nature, or identity, or differentia, or distinguish feature. For example, the reason for us to call a tiger a cat and a wolf a dog is that the family of cats’ claws have meat pads and the family of wolfs’ claws have not meat pads, but keratin. From the perspective of zootaxy, the differentia of cats and dogs is demonstrated by the different feature of their claws.

The concept of essence in Chinese at present refers also to objective laws. For instance, it is the gravitation that plays the critical role from the perspective of essence, when we say that the appearance of many natural phenomena, such as the sun rises from the east and sets to the west, or almost all the water from the big rivers run into the seas, or the areas of lower elevation, and the phenomenon of sea

tides, etc.

The formation of the concept of essence is also the formation of a dominant thinking moment. The formation or appearance of the dominant thinking moment of essence also go through a series of thinking moments. Therefore, the concept of essence can be apposite against many concepts.

In the matter of fact, we are treating upon mainly the objects from the perspective of the subjective disposition, when we make the phenomenon be apposite against the essence. Therefore, the dictionaries and textbooks of the present time usually explain the essence as “the intrinsic property which determines the nature, feature and trend of development of the things and objects. The essence of things and objects is concealed, and demonstrated by the phenomenon, cannot be recognized or perceived directly and simply through the senses. We must grasp the essence through the phenomenon.” (Note 3) Therefore the reality is that we are trying to find the common characteristics of many things and objects, when we make the concept of phenomenon be apposite against the concept of the essence.

Now we can put forward the four concepts, that is, objective essence, subjective essence, internal essence and external essence. The objective essence refers to the genus of things. Everything can have many genus as stated above, because everything can be observed and studied from many perspectives, and can be connected with many things. The subjective essence refers to the fact that we give names to the relevant objects and things. Each thing or object can have many subjective essence at this moment. For instance, the potato has got its Chinese name *to do*.

The external essence refers to the fact that humans can category the objects according to their external characteristics. For external essence, we can category tigers and lions into the family of cats, according to their characteristics of claws.

The internal essence refers to the fact that we can category the objects or phenomenon according to their inherent connections. For instance, we can say that the law of universal gravitation play a determined role in the phenomena, such as the sun rises from the east and sets to the west, or almost all the water from the big rivers run into the seas, the phenomenon of sea tides, etc. It is relatively easy to find the objective essence and external essence in our daily life. It is not so easy to find the subjective essence or internal essence. For instance, it is at least several thousand years ago, human beings began to record the phenomena that the sun rises from the east and sets to the west, or almost all the water from the big rivers run into the seas, etc. But only about three hundred and more years ago, Isaac Newton, the great scientist of Britain, connected these phenomena together and put forward the law of universal gravitation. Therefore, it is of great importance in science and philosophy to find the internal connects and internal essence.

The subjective essence refers mainly to the naming of the objects between different language communities. This issue relates mainly the issues of the sizes of different language communities and which language has got more advanced grammar, etc. It is not an issue which easy to be resolved. It is relates further the issues, such as the rise and fall of a nation, the political, economical, cultural, scientific and technological powers of different districts of a nation, or of different nations, even of the issues of the

cultural security and sovereign integrity of nations, etc. Therefore, the issue of subjective essence is the least easy to be resolved.

As for essence or essentiality, Hegel once said that “true Being is just the superseding of all that is immediate ... it should be remembered that the only means by which the Essence and the inner self can be verified is their appearance in outward reality...it is the very nature of the world immediate objects to be appearance only. Knowing it to be so, we know at the same time the essence, which, far from staying beyond the appearance, rather manifests its own essentiality by depositing the world to a mere appearance.” (Note 4) Here Hegel explained the source and differentia of the essence and essentiality. He also stated that the inevitability of the transition between the essence and the phenomenon, that is, the appearance in Kant’ term. However, he demonstrated the truth with some examples which are not immediate. And he did not resolve the question of what is Being properly. Therefore, the readers of his book quite often do not know what he is talking about at all. This is the inevitable result that his books take being as the starting point of his expression, that is, takes the result of subjective disposition as the starting point of his expression. This is also the reason why the existent forms of Latin can not separate totally or thoroughly the contents of the five concepts of subject, object, subjectivity, objectivity, phenomenon, because each efficient expression of the existent forms of Latin has to involve tense. This is also the reason why the Occident circle of philosophy have tried very hard to develop the phenomenology from the end of 19th century, wanting to separate totally or thoroughly the contents of the five concepts above, but has not reach the goal until now.

2. Form and Essence

When we make the concept of essence be antagonistic to the concept of form, essence refers still to the genus of the outside circumstances, or refers to the abstract end of an object, or refers to general character or generality of objects. At the same time, form refers to concrete end of an object, or refers to particular end of an object, or refers to specific character of an object.

But form is different from phenomenon. The concept of form refers to the result that we have returned to the phenomenon from the thinking point of essence, and dispose the phenomenon again from the thinking point of essence. Hegel said that “all the refined things belong to forms”. (Note 5) What he means, or reality of the human thinking, is that form is the results and categories that humans have made the second time about the phenomenon or objective world with the concept of essence, or with the subjective definition to certain degree, after the subjects or humans had disposed the phenomenon or the objective world to the stage of essence, which had made before the second time of the objects, in their minds. The concept of phenomenon is not defined, or refined, or limited by this thinking moment. The concept of phenomenon can refer to, or mean, anything, which is perceived or sensed by human intuition. For instance, it is a phenomenon to ordinary mass for them to see a medical X-ray photograph. But to the doctors who have been trained for many years, what they see are the existent forms of the human inner organs.

Now we can do the work to distinguish clearly the concept of objective form from the concept of subjective form. The concept of objective form equals to the concept of phenomenon. It refers to the objective phenomenon, which refers to any objective phenomenon, which human perception and thinking can face directly and immediately at any moment. The concept of subjective form refers to concept itself, it is because that only the subjective form is the dominant thinking moment with some definition or refined factors. The definition or refiner comes from the consensus of the language communities. It is because that concepts are used to communicate between people. And the concepts can only play their roles after they have been materialized through the moment of using words. The meaning of words can only go through the moment of the consensus of the language communities. Then the words can play their objective roles. The so-called consensus refers to the fact that the content of a word, which expressed by the word, needs the agreement of at least some persons of the language community. Each consensus is got through a series of objective processes. It can not be changed by any individual himself. Therefore, the subjective form is also some phenomenon, which is defined, or refined, or limited, by some phenomena. Here again appears the transform or the change itself into the its opposite. The subjective form, which can have many choices, change into the objective phenomenon, which is defined or refined or limited by the consensus, and which cannot be changed by any individual himself. Therefore, so long as there are thinkings, so long as the thinkings do not end, there are a series of transformation from thinkings into their opposite, that is, into the state of objective phenomena.

Now we can put forward the two concepts, that is, the concept of existent form and the concept of expressing form.

Hegel himself did not put forward the viewpoint that form can be further divided into the concept of existent form and the concept of expressing form. However, it is very important for us to put forward the viewpoint that form can be further divided or transformed into two concepts, that is, the concept of existent form and the concept of expressing form, in the process of promoting our cognition about our subjective world and objective world. It is because that the final aim for us to develop our cognition about our subjective world and objective world is to raise and improve our absolute living standard and to make sure of the survival and development of the community in which we live. We have to go through the process of deduction, and further to transform our correct cognition into our objective practice, that is, to transform our correct cognition into the objective activities of human bodies, in order to raise and improve our absolute living standard and to make sure of the survival and development of the community in which we live.

The existent form can state clearly the relationship of the direct identity. The existent form refers to the result that we make a big concept or big proposition transform into a relatively small concept or small proposition, or refers to the result that we make a upper-seat word transform into a inferior word. For instance, we make a relatively big concept, e.g. vertebrate, transform into a relatively small concept, such as fish, amphibious animal, reptile, birds, mammal, etc., when we say that the existent forms of vertebrate have fish, amphibious animal, reptile, birds, mammal, etc. We make a relatively big concept

of vertebrate transform into a inferior concept, when we say that the humans are vertebrate. In the real daily life, people usually transform a relatively big concept into a relatively small concept, which have the objective immediacy. People would transform directly the proposition that they are hungry into the relatively small concepts, such as bread, sandwich, cakes, milk, beef, etc. Very few people would think the breakfast, lunch, supper, which are relatively bigger concepts compared with bread, milk, beef, etc. It is because that humans would carry out the principle of briefness in their daily life. It is also a biological instinct of humans, which is got through the evolution of millions of years. Only in this way, each existential individual can do more things, which is beneficial to himself and his offspring, in his limited life time. In present world, it is a means of life, which is not very common, to be able to speak in a neat and tidy way and to hit the mark with a single comment.

The existent forms are the result of re-classifying of the phenomena with the concepts of essence, or genus, or form, after humans have classified the phenomena for the first time. This classification has the characteristic that humans have got the subjective determination. This classification is usually a process of deduction from the perspective of the formal logic. For instance, we can say that apples are the existent forms of fruit, and fruit is the essence of apples; the assortment of the apples of Red Fuji is the existent form of apples, and apple is the essence of the assortment of Red Fuji apples, etc., and go on deducting for many times, until to one apple which is concrete and can be sensed directly by humans sense organs. This reduction is a reduction from an essence to a particular; a reduction from infinity to limited; from generality to individuality; from universality to particularity; and the deduction which is nearer to the objective practice of humans than the induction.

However, it is a biological instinct of humans, which is got through the evolution of millions of years, no matter it is the deduction or induction. Each ordinary adult individual of human beings has to do the deduction and induction for many times everyday, so long as he is in normal health. It is because that each humans have to do the deduction and induction for many time everyday, in order to make his living and try to have a better practice, no matter it is the deduction or induction. From one perspective, it is also one of the differentia of humans.

Existent form usually has the characteristics that can be directly perceived through the sense organs. The expressing form usually does not have the characteristics of directly perceived through the sense organs. All of them are the results and outcomes of the humans' thoughts. Of course, each of the result and outcome of the humans' thinking reflect certain objective reality.

The expressing form can manifest the relationship which does not have the direct identity. The expressing form refers to result which we connect the phenomena, which do not have the direct identity, or which do not have the connection of genus and species, that is, the result that we think that there is the inner connection between different things. For instance, when Newton and the other scientists of modern times connected the phenomenon that the sun rises from the east and sets to the west, or almost all the water from the big rivers run into the seas, or the sea tides, etc., which seem that they are not coherent at all. They would tell us that all these phenomena are the results of the law of the universal

gravitation, and they are all the expressing forms of the law of the universal gravitation. Another example is that we can get to know the speed of the moving of the air molecules of a room, when we look at the thermometer of the room. It is because that the indoor temperature show or manifest the speed of the moving of the air molecules of a room. The quicker the speed of the moving of the air molecules in a room, the higher the indoor temperature in the room is. Humans have created many kinds of instruments and methods to help humans to get to know the natural and social phenomena which cannot be observed, or inspected, or investigated directly, especially in quantity, by humans' sense organs. For instance, we can make use of expansion coefficient of mercury or of the red alcohol to scale the indoor temperature of the room, that is, the speed of the moving of the air molecules of a room. They are the relevant expressing forms of the quantity of the relevant things, such as the quantity of the water, which flows out after a royal crown is put into a container which is full of water, and the place of the pointer of a voltmeter, the indicator of the resistance, the pointer of a scale, etc., because humans can not get to know directly the quantity of these things and have to create many kinds of instruments and methods to help humans to get to know these quantity.

We can get to know, through reading *Critique of Pure Reason*, that Kant took the existent form of things as the result of "analytic judgment", and he took the expressing form of things as the result of "synthetic", for he said in the book that

"Analytic judgments (affirmative) are therefore those in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is thought through identity; those in which these connection is thought without identity should be entitled synthetic. The former, as adding nothing through the predicate to the concept of the subject, but merely breaking it up into those constituent concepts that have all along been thought in it, although confusedly, can also be entitled explicative. The latter, on the other hand, add to the concept of subject a predicate which has not been in any wise thought in it, and which no analysis could possible extract from it; and they may be therefore be entitled ampliative...analytic judgement are very important, and indeed necessary, but only for obtaining that clearness in concepts which is requisite for such a sure and wide synthesis as will lead to a genuinely new addition to all previous knowledge." (Note 6)

The classification in this way made by Kant is that he did not studied deeply about the ways and modes which humans get to know the knowledge, especially he did not studied deeply about the connection and difference between the individual cognition and the collective cognition or group cognition. Kant felt vaguely that there is the difference between the individual cognition and the collective cognition. Therefore he put forward the concepts "inner and out intuition", and "derivative (*intuitus derivativus*)", and "original intuition (*intuitus originations*)", and "intellectual intuition", etc. (Note 7) However, because of the limitation and restriction of the epoch, he did not recognize the difference between the individual cognition and the collective cognition properly, nor did he resolve the problem of the relationship between the individual cognition and the collective cognition properly. This was the direct reason for Hegel to develop the dialectics, trying to resolve the above problems, which was put forward by Kant, but Kant himself did not resolve.

Besides, in present Chinese language, the concepts of analytic and synthetic contain more content. Therefore, it is better to use the term “existent form” and the term “expressing form” to express “the result of analytic judgments and the result of synthetic judgment”, when we establish the system of the modern philosophical methodology. I believe that the term “existent form” and the term “expressing form” echo more the Chinese customs of expression, and can express the thinking processes and results of the thinking processes of the present people more precisely.

Essence is in the middle position of the process of the human thinkings, or in the position of intermediary of the process of the human thinkings, in the three concepts of concept, form and essence. It has to go through the confinement or negation of the concept of essence, that is, go through the moment of consensus of the language community, no matter the transition from the concept of concept or idea, etc., to the concept of form, or the transition from the concept of form to the concept of concept or idea etc. That is to say, essence is the result of the thinking of a language community which has got some common agreement to some extent, or consensus to some extent, on certain things. It is limited and confined by the moment of consensus, to some extent, of a language community. But phenomenon is not limited by this moment, except that humans need to raise the simple sense or perception to the moment of concept. Phenomenon is the lowest degree of human cognition. It is the simple sense or perception of human minds about the outside world, or the simple sense without any further disposition of human minds, or any further disposition of human subjective disposition, or the simple reflection or response of human biological organs, such as eyes, ears, noses, or tongues, or bodies, etc.

The reason for us to keep the antithesis or antagonism between the essence and form is to develop our thinking and practice. We can summarize the abstract end of a concrete object as another concept, in order to connect or link this object with more objects, for humans to have better or more sorts of division or practice. We can summarize the abstract end of a dog as the animal of the family of dog, or a carnivorous animal, or a mammal animal, or a vertebrate, or a chordate animal, or an animal, etc., in order to provide the base and convenience to make better or more usage of the dog. For example, we can use the milk of a dog to feed the babies of the other animals of the family of the dog, such as the baby of the tiger, etc., when we summarize that a dog as a mammal animal.

The so-called form can also refer to the social system in the field of human society. It is because that the mankind can realize some aims, or some aims which are the results of human thinking, through establishing and keeping some social systems as the usable social form or method to realize the aim of the mankind. For instance, humans can make use of social division as the form or method to realize the collective practice and collective thinking, or colony practice and colony thinking, or group practice and group thinking.

3. Form, Matter and Content

Hegel put forward the viewpoint that form can be antagonistic to the three concepts, that is, to essence, matter and content. (Note 8) But Hegel never made definitions of the two concepts of matter or content.

Because of this reason, the Chinese scholars, who study the western philosophy, have not explained clearly the relationship and difference between the concept of matter and the concept of content until now.

Kant explained the difference between the concept of matter and the concept of form as

“That in the appearance which corresponds to sensation I term its *matter*; but that which so determines the manifold of appearance that it allows of being ordered in certain relations, I term the *form* of appearance...Space and time are its pure forms, and sensation in general its matter...Now the relations in which concepts in a state of mind can stand to one another are...the determinable and the determination (matter and form).” (Note 9)

I think that the above words by Kant are reasonable and should not be taken lightly. It is because that Kant’s words above make the concept of matter and the concept of form be apposite against one another, and make the statement of them with the genus and differentia. However, it needs to bring the concepts of essence and content together with the concepts of matter and form to discriminate the difference between the four concepts above. It is because that the “relation” in Kant’s above words actually refers to the concept of essence. But Kant never studied the concept of essence in detail, to say nothing of giving the concept of essence the definition with a genus and differentia. Therefore we can not say that Kant had given a proper explanation about the difference between form and matter. When we make the concepts of phenomenon (appearance in Kant’s terminology), matter, essence, content, form, stand to one another and think them though in our minds, we may discover that the forms of appearance (phenomenon), which refer to the content in this book, that is, the content when we make the concepts of matter and content stand to one another in our minds.

Kant’s following words show clearly that Kant did not make clear the difference between the concept of matter and content fully,

“The reason is that in the [field of] appearance, in the term of which all objects are given us, there are two elements, the form intuition (space and time), which can be known and determined completely *a priori*, and the matter (the physical element) or content—the latter signifying something which is met with in space and time and which therefore contains an existent corresponding to sensation.” (Note 10)

Hegel explained the concept of matter in his book *Logic* that

“the forms of thinking, when they are in the matter, they are sinking in the conscious intuition, presentations, our desires and wishes, or sinking in the desires and wishes with presentations—there was no desire and wish, there was no notion,—making the forms of thinking free themselves from the matter, and put forward the generality, essence and genus themselves, and make them be the objects for observation, like what Plato, especially like Aristotle, should be thought a great advance; it is the beginning to recognize the generality, essence and genus.” (Note 11)

However, Hegel’s explanation about matter does not give the genus and differentia of matter, nor does make the readers clear about what he was speaking about, because he did not bring the four concepts of

matter, content, essence and form together, and make them directly opposite or be antagonistic to each other.

I think, both matter and form are dominant thinking moments or objects when they are antagonistic to each other. However, the content of the concept of matter and the content of the concept of form are different. The content of the concept of matter, that is, what the concept of matter refers to, is the phenomenon or appearance which has not been disposed by the two recessive thinking moments of essence or form, or the phenomenon or appearance which is in the state of chaos, or in the primeval state of universe according to folklore, that is, in the state of, as Kant says, “which corresponds to sensation”, (Note 12) therefore, matter can not be or come into the state of form.

In Hegel’s words cited above, Hegel also explained the concept of form to some extent. In Hegel’s words above, presentation refers to recalls and connection in the mind, while the generality, essence and genus refers to the end of abstraction of things. Then, Hegel had an explanation or an explanatory statement nearly with genus and differentia about the concept of content. However, Hegel did not directly explain the concept of content with the genus or differentia after all, especially did not bring and explain the three concepts of content, matter or form together, being antagonistic to each other or stand one another directly.

I think, the concept of content refers to the phenomenon or appearance which has been disposed through the two thinking moments of essence and form, or refers to the phenomenon or appearance which can become or enter into the concept of form, or refers to the phenomenon or appearance which we have know its essence, that is, as what Kant said “that which so determines the manifold of appearance that it allows of being ordered in certain relations”. (Note 13) For instance, we may classify the animals, which we know that they nurse their babies with their milk, as the existent forms of mammal, if we would like to find the mammal among many animals. And we have to treat the animals, which we do not know if they nurse their babies with their milk or not, as matter. We can only see if they are mammals and make the correct judgment, through the ways of observing directly if they nurse their babies with their milk or not, or asking directly the people who had observed directly if they nurse their babies with their milk, or consulting the books, that is, asking indirectly the people who had observed directly if they nurse their babies with their milk. Therefore, in the circumstances when the concept of matter is antagonistic to the concept of content, the content is the phenomenon which has been observed and disposed to some extent by the subjects or humans, while the matter is the phenomenon which has not been observed and disposed to some extent by the subject or humans. Hegel said in the preface of the second edition of his *Logic*, that

“content has its form in itself, and content gets its vitality and nature or essence only through its forms...following the content is brought into the scene of the logic observation, what become the object is matter, but not thing, or is the concept of the matter...the object itself can not be intuited or presented by sensation; it is only the object, result or content for thinking, and the things in itself, and *Logos*, and the rationality of Being, and the truth of what has got the name of matter; at least, it is *Logos* which

should be placed outside the sphere of the science of logic.” (Note 14)

Hegel said also in the third edition of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, about the issue, that “every content (a content is always concrete) includes not only diverse but even opposite characteristics.” (Note 15)

Of course, the concept of matter and the concept of content can transit to each other, that is, the concept of matter transits to the concept of content, or the concept of content transits to the concept of matter, at certain circumstances. The circumstances are if the subject has gone through his subjective observation or subjective disposition, and if the subject has lost his memory about the object. This is the standard or criterion for us to determine if a concrete thing should belong to matter or to content. The previous matter will become content, when we have observed and disposed the phenomenon, which had not been observed to some extent before. It will become the content, when some of the scientists, many adults, even some young people have got to know some characteristics of the matter. However, it remains in the state of matter or even phenomenon to the people who do not know anything about it. For instant, only some of the human beings know that the whales and dolphin are mammal, at the same time, many people do not know that the whales and dolphins are mammal. In this circumstance, those who know that the whales and dolphins are mammal will list the whales and dolphins as mammal, when they are asked to list the existent forms of mammal. As to the people, who do not know that the whales or dolphins are mammal, what they can do is to list the whales and dolphins as matter, or ignore them directly. They need first learn from others, or the encyclopedias, or dictionaries, if the whales and dolphins are mammal, or observe the activities of the whales and dolphins directly to see if they nurse their babies with milk, and then they can make the correct judgment. It is because that each younger generations have to learn the knowledge which the old generations had learned from their predecessors, and each younger generation have to make the matter become content repeatedly. That is to say, each younger generation have to get know the outside world again. It is just like each younger generation have to learn to speak. Of course, the course to make the matter become content repeatedly would usually take the form or model of education, that is, would take the form or model of theoretical learning, and take the forms or models of division, or re-division of disciplines, or condensed, or concentrated, or editing the text books, or dictionaries, or encyclopedias, etc., in order to save the time for the younger generations, for that they can grasp the knowledge, which has got advantages for their survival and development and which has been grasped by their older generations in a short time, in order for the younger generations to have time to explore in the unknown fields and grasp the new knowledge, and increase the absolute living standard of them further. The aim or reason for us to keep the two concepts of content and matter is, at this moment, to use the process of changing the matter into the content, to succeed the knowledge and experience which our ancestors had got, or to make human beings to become unknown things into known things, or to observe the known things from new perspectives, e.g., to study the laws of dolphins’ reproduction and nursing.

What should be stated again here is, that each existent and concrete individual, or each existent and

concrete community, can actually only get limited, or quite limited ability, to change the matter into the content, that is, the ability of cognition, in a limited duration of his life or their lives, though there is the possibility to develop infinitely the ability to change the matter into the content. This limitation comes from the history and population of the concrete community in which he lives or they live. The historical reason is that the duration or life of each concrete individual, or each concrete community, or each language community, is limited. The real history of human beings shows that each concrete community, or each language community, has got its duration or life several decades or hundreds of years, at most several thousands of years. Therefore, the knowledge, even in the condensed or concentrated forms, which they can pass on to the next generations, is limited. As for the individuals of human beings, the life duration of each individual also limited. The life-span of ordinary individual is less than one hundred years, at most is a little bit than one hundred years. The population of each community, which existed in the real history, is also limited. It cannot allow the population to increase infinitely, because of the limitation of the natural resources of the earth, which cannot be used for the second time, or even the resources which can be used for the second time, such as fresh water, clean air, etc. Even when the whole world will unite as one sovereign state and the official written language will become one in the remote future, the natural resources are still limited. Some people do not know where the limitation of the collect ability of human thinking comes from. The reason is that they do not connect the human thinking with the factor of the population of human beings.

Content does not have the characteristics of the object which directly perceived through the sense organs sometime. Form relatively closer to the object which can be perceived directly through the senses. Content often refers to the natural or social function which an object can play. People often try to get some function or attribute through the way of getting the existent form of it. The content also often refers to the social or natural structure of an object. What the content refers to concretely depends on the context, that is, depends on the concrete situation, that is, depends on the subject need and the consensus of the language community.

I think, the concept of form can be antagonistic or opposite to the two concepts about content, that is, the concept of the objective content and the concept of the subject content. The concept of the object content refers to the antagonism or antithesis among the fellows of the same language community, when they have got the same thought or cognition about the existent form of one object, e.g. apple. The concept of the subjective content refers to the antagonism or antithesis among the fellows of the same language community, when they have got consensus of the name of the object. One aim for us to establish and keep antagonism or antithesis of the concepts of the form and subjective content is to help people, who belong to different language communities, to get consensus when they have got the same cognition about the content of the same thing. That is to say, to help people, who belong to different language communities, to translate or interpret properly as soon as possible, in order to be convenient to quicken the process of the exchange of their thoughts and the division between them.

What should be pointed here is that the concepts of phenomenon, or appearance, or essence, or form, or

matter, or content, or concept, in fact can refer to the same objective thing, or the same objective matter. We can use different names to refer to the same objective thing, or the same objective matter, only because the thinking rate or thinking stage are different in our minds when we observe, or study, or inspect the same thing, or same matter. One of the facts, which Hegel wanted to explain clearly, is that the seven concepts of phenomenon, appearance, essence, form, matter, content, and concept, can transit from any one to another in humans' thinking at any time in certain circumstances, in his three works, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Logic*, and *the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. However, he did not explain clearly what are the circumstances.

I think, the circumstances are to begin a new process of thinking. The so-called new process of thinking is that we observe or recognize the same thing or the same matter from a new perspective, or from a new degree of abstraction, or we begin to think the same thing by linking with another thing or another matter. It is because that humans can stop any process of thinking at any time, and make a new process of thinking at any time, and then begin a new process of thinking. The new process of thinking can be carried out either by the previous person or by the other person, or persons. This is the objective foundation why humans can transit the seven concepts of phenomenon, or appearance, or essence, or form, or matter, or content, or concept, one another at any time, on the condition of objectification.

On the above objective foundation, people can materialize and objectify their thinking into a new concept or a new series of concepts through the moment of linguistic expression, and then make the new concept or the new series of concepts be easy to remember by the persons, who thinks, and be necessary to be understood and remembered by the other people. This is also the reason why Hegel can put forward the viewpoint that the same thing can be in the three states of in-itself, for-itself or in-and-for-itself, in his three books, that is, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Logic*, *the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. This viewpoint is quite inspiring.

For instance, a potato is in the stage of phenomenon to me, when I have not the ability to distinguish the potato with other matter or thing, and when I have not the tendency or will to study or describe the potato, that is, when I have not objectivated the potato. The potato is in the stage of matter to me, or the potato is a matter to me, when I tend or will to study or describe the potato, that is, when I have objectivated the potato. The potato is in the stage of essence to me, or the potato is the essence to me, when I have connected the potato with the other potato and have made the potato as the sample of the other potato. The potato is in the stage of concept to me, or the potato is the concept to me, when the potato has got the consensus of the community about its name, that is, potato, and the potato is in its dominant thinking moment, or when I have taken the other potato as the essence of this potato. The potato is in the stage of content to me, or the potato is the content to me, when I have confirmed that this thing is a potato, or when I connect this potato with the other things and take the other potato as the essence or examples of potato. The potato is in the stage of existent form to me, or the potato is the form to me, when I have made this potato as a special potato, and when I have make this potato be antagonistic or opposite to the other potato and have taken the other potato as the essence or examples

of potato. Anyhow, the potato is still that potato, the object is still the same object, only the subjects are in different thinking stages or thinking moments, or from different perspectives of their recognition or knowing, then we have got seven concepts about it, that is, phenomenon, or appearance, or matter, or essence, or form, or content, or concept. And the infants and children and teenager are in the stages of the phenomenon and matter of recognition and knowing usually more than the adults are, and in the stages of essence, or form, or content, or concept, of their recognition or knowing usually less than the adults are. While the adult are in the stages of essence, or form, or content, or concept, usually more than the infants and children and teenagers are.

It is the natural ability, which the humans have got through the process of evolution of millions of years, to let the seven concepts, that is, phenomenon, or appearance, or matter, or essence, or form, or content, or concept, and the other concepts, to transit to each other. To each individual or each community of human beings, it is an ability to get naturally. This is the most fundamental reason for Kant to put forward the concepts that humans have the abilities of *a priori*.

One of the function for human to let the seven concepts, that is, phenomenon, or appearance, or matter, or essence, or form, or content, or concept, and the other concepts, to transit to each other, is that it can quicken and speed up the individual thinking and the collective thinking to make humans to have higher levels of thinking and practice, and to raise the absolute standard of living of humans. For instance, we can take the concept of apple as the essence as well as the form. When we take the concept of apple as the essence, that is, the genus, we can connect all kinds of apples and help the producers of the apples to raise their incomes. When we take the concept of apple as the form, that is, when we take the concept of the apple as the existent form of fruit, and make the apple connect all kinds of fruit, such as pear, peach, etc., and help the producers of the apples to raise their incomes. For instance, the output of apples was only about dozens of thousands of tons in the Shaanxi province, P. R. China, where I live, in the seventies of 20th century. The output of apples was more than 8 million tons in the year of 2010, after the development of more than 40 years. However, only 6 million tons of apples have got high degree, which could be sold as the apples which could be eaten freshly by people. The other 2 million tons of apples are middle or low degree of apples, which could not be sold as the apples which could be eaten freshly or sold by people or apple producers. The tradesmen, who came from all over the world, only pay attention to the high degree of the apples, that is, they only pay attention to the apples which are made as the concept of the apples. While the Fruit Department of the Shaanxi Provincial Government had to pay attention to all the apples which are made as the forms of the apples, that is, had to pay attention to middle and low degree of the apples, too. The Fruit Department of the Shaanxi Provincial Government had to try to help some entrepreneurs to buy the middle and low degree of the apples, and help them to establish enough factories before hand, to produce fruit juice, in order to help the apple producers to raise their income.

To each concrete individual or community, however, to let the concepts of phenomenon, or appearance, or matter, or essence, or form, or content, or concept, or the other concepts, to transit to each other, is

only a potential ability. It need the individual or community to make its effort to make use, illustrate, develop, of the potential ability. In addition, how much effort the individual or community can make is also limited by the historic condition. For instance, human landing on the moon on the year of 1969 for the first time. It demonstrated that humans have relatively very wide knowledge, consideration and recognition about the moon and our space environment. The humans could not land on the moon two thousand years ago, because humans did not have so wide or deep knowledge, consideration or recognition about the moon and our space environment.

To each individual and community, the other aim to let the concepts of phenomenon, or appearance, or matter, or essence, or form, or content, or concept, or the other concepts, to transit to each other, is to recognize or discover the same object or the same thing from a new perspective, or a new degree of abstraction, besides to carry on and succeed the knowledge which has been grasped by the old generations and which is good to the survival and development of the present generation. Otherwise, the transition to each other again and again is useless. It is just a waste of time, or a waste of life of the relevant persons. It is just like the policemen investing a case of crime. The policemen can examine and investigate the same scene again and again, but from different perspectives, till they get the real facts. However, each examination and investigation should have got new way of thinking, or from a new perspective, or made use of new method. Otherwise it is just a waste of time.

Kant made some description about the characteristic of the five concepts of appearance, concept, form, matter and content. But, he did not study deeply the concept of essence, or his degree of consideration and objectification is rather low on the concept of essence, therefore, he never recognize that the five concepts can transit to each other in our mind or in the process of our thinking in certain conditions.

What Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* wants to explain is that the six concepts of phenomenon, matter, essence, concept, form, content can transit to each other in our mind or in the process of our thinking on certain conditions. Therefore, his theory made great progress in the axiomatization of subjective dialects on the foundation of Kant's theory. However, he did not make the definition of the six concepts with genus and differentia beforehand, and he did not make the definition or description of the concepts, or thinking moment, of subjectivity or subjective disposition with genus and differentia, therefore, very few scholars could understand what he was saying, or what he wanted to say, or why he said in that way.

Today we have to first make the definition and description of the concepts, or thinking moments, of subjectivity, subjective disposition, phenomenon, matter, essence, concept, form and content, with the genus and differentia, then we can explain clearly the relationship between the eight concepts, and make the following scholars be able to develop the subjective dialectics and the subjective logic quicker and easier.

I think that Hegel had recognized that he need make the definition and description of the six concepts, or thinking moments, of phenomenon, matter, essence, concept, form and content, with the genus and differentia, with essence and differentia, after he had finished the writing of *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

He already tried to give the definitions of many concepts, with essence and differentia, in his *Logic* and *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. However, he had never a proper understanding, or interpreting, or answering the question of Being, that is, he never understood or explained properly the questions of what were the thinking moment of subjectivity or subjective disposition, therefore he never made the proper definition of the six concepts, or the six thinking moments, of phenomenon, matter, essence, concept, form and content, with genus or differentia, or describe convincingly the above six concepts. This is because the limitation of the epoch in which he lived. The epoch in which he lived lacked the historic condition that an outsider sees more objectively and subjectively. Anyhow, the three books written by Hegel, that is, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Logic*, *the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, are all inspiring and make great contribution, foreshadowing and preparation for us to resolve the above questions.

What should be also pointed out is that I deal with the six concepts of phenomenon, matter, essence, concept, form and content, which have got the same degree of abstraction totally, in the context that they are parallel concepts in abstraction. In the other contexts, I or other scholars may do not dispose the six concepts as that they have got the same degree of abstraction. It need me or the other scholars to determine how to dispose these concepts in the other contexts.

Notes

Note 1. Immanuel Kant's Critique Of Pure Reason, Translated by Norman Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929, pp. 41-42, B 1, pp. 45-46, A 3, B 6-B 7.

Note 2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic*, trans. by Yizhi Yang, Peking: The Commercial Press, 1976, vol. 2, p. 79, (IV. pp. 81-82) [in Chinese]

Note 3. Edited by the Editors' Group of the Language Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Modern Chinese Dictionary*, Peking: The Commercial Press, 1979, p.52.

Note 4. Hegel's *Logic*, Being Part One of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), Translated by William Wallace, Third edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, Reprinted 1991, p. 164, §112; p. 188, §131.

Note 5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic*, translated by Yizhi Yang, Peking: The Commercial Press, 1976, vol. 2, p. 77, (IV. pp. 79-80) [in Chinese]

Note 6. Immanuel Kant's Critique Of Pure Reason, Trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929, p. 48, A 7, B 10-11, p. 51, A 10, B 13-14.

Note 7. *ibid.*, p. 90, B 72.

Note 8. See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic*, translated by Yizhi Yang, Peking: The Commercial Press, 1976, vol. 2, pp. 75-87, (IV. pp. 77-90) [in Chinese]

Note 9. Immanuel Kant's Critique Of Pure Reason, Trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929, p. 65-66, A 20, B 34, p. 277, A 261, B 317.

Note 10. *ibid.*, p. 583, A 723, B 751.

Note 11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic*, trans. by Yizhi Yang, Peking: The Commercial Press, 1966, vol. 1, p. 10, (III. pp. 13-14) [in Chinese]

Note 12. Immanuel Kant's *Critique Of Pure Reason*, Trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929, p. 65, A 20, B 34.

Note 13. *ibid.*, p. 66, A 20, B 34.

Note 14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic*, trans. by Yizhi Yang, Peking: The Commercial Press, 1966, vol. 1, p. 10 (III. pp. 20-21) [in Chinese]

Note 15. Hegel's *Logic*, Being Part One of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. by William Wallace, third edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, Reprinted 1991, p. 204, §143.